

# 84 Classic Yoga Asanas

**84 Classic Yoga Asanas** taught by Lord Shiva is mentioned in several classic texts on yoga. Some of these asanas are considered highly important in the yogic canon: texts that do mention the 84 frequently single out the first four as necessary or vital to attain yogic perfection. However, a complete list of Shiva's asanas remains as yet unverified, with only one text attempting a complete corpus.

## Yoga texts

Patanjali's *Yoga Sutra* (4-2nd century BC) does not mention a single asana by name, merely specifying the characteristics of a good asana.<sup>[1]</sup> Later yoga texts however, do mention the 84 Classic Asanas and associate them with Shiva.

The *Goraksha Samhita*<sup>[2]</sup> (10-11th century CE), or *Goraksha Paddhati*, an early hatha yogic text, describes the origin of the 84 classic asanas. Observing that there are as many postures as there are beings, and asserting that there are 840,000 species in all, the text states that Lord Shiva fashioned an asana for each 100,000, thus giving 84 in all, although it mentions and describes only two in detail: the siddhasana and the padmasana.<sup>[3]</sup>

The *Hatha Yoga Pradipika* (15th century CE) specifies that of these 84, the first four are important, namely the siddhasana, padmasana, bhadrasana and simhasana.<sup>[4]</sup>

The *Hatha Ratnavali* (17th century CE)<sup>[5]</sup> is one of the few texts to attempt a listing of all the 84, although 4 out of its list do not have meaningful translations from the Sanskrit, and 21 are merely mentioned without any description.<sup>[6]</sup> In all, 52 asanas of the *Hatha Ratnavali* are confirmed and described by the text itself, or other asana corpora.<sup>[7]</sup>

The *Gheranda Samhita* (late 17th century CE) asserts that Shiva taught 8,400,000 asanas, out of which 84 are preeminent, and "32 are useful in the world of mortals."<sup>[8]</sup> These 32 are: siddhasana, padmasana, bhadrasana, muktasana, vajrasana, svastikasana, simhasana, gomukhasana, virasana, dhanurasana, mritasana, guptasana, matsyasana, matsyendrasana, gorakshana, paschimottanasana, utkatasana, sankatasana, mayurasana, kukkutasana, kurmasana, uttanakurmakasana, uttanamandukasana, vrikshasana, mandukasana, garudasana, vrishasana, shalabhasana, makarasana, ushtrasana, bhujangasana, and yogasana.<sup>[9]</sup>

In *Shiva Samhita* (17-18th century CE) the poses ugrasana and svastikasana replace the latter two of the *Hatha Yoga Pradipika*.

## References

- [1] Patanjali Yoga Sutra, Book 2 (<http://sacred-texts.com/hin/ysp/ysp04.htm>)
- [2] <http://omnamo.narod.ru/gorakshapaddhati.html>
- [3] Goraksha Paddhati (<http://omnamo.narod.ru/gorakshapaddhati.html>)
- [4] Chapter 1, 'On Asanas', Hatha Yoga Pradipika (<http://sacred-texts.com/hin/hyp/hyp03.htm>)
- [5] Yoga Institute (Santacruz East Bombay India) (1988). *Cyclopaedia Yoga* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=2AXbAAAAMAAJ>). Yoga Institute. p. 32. . Retrieved 10 April 2011.
- [6] Summa
- [7] Homage to the Source (<http://www.homagetotheforce.com/asana-homage.html>)
- [8] Mallinson, James (2004). *The Gheranda samhita: the original Sanskrit and an English translation* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=73DzK3kTIgEC>). YogaVidya.com. p. 16. ISBN 978-0-9716466-3-6. . Retrieved 10 April 2011.
- [9] Mallinson, James (2004). *The Gheranda samhita: the original Sanskrit and an English translation* (<http://books.google.com/books?id=73DzK3kTIgEC>). YogaVidya.com. p. 17. ISBN 978-0-9716466-3-6. . Retrieved 10 April 2011.

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